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Wimbledon

Richard C. Crepeau
University of Central Florida, richard.crepeau@ucf.edu

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The term "historic" is often used in describing any number of sporting events. It is sometimes used to exaggerate the significance of an event, often in order to promote it. There are times, though, when the term is not only appropriate, but indeed, required. The Gentleman's Final at Wimbledon today was historic in a number of ways.

Andy Murray became the first British men's singles finalist at Wimbledon since Henry "Bunny" Anderson in 1938. There has not been a British men's champion since Fred Perry who won his third Wimbledon Championship in a row in 1936. No doubt few among us remember those finals, but many of us do remember Fred Perry who was a commentator on tennis for the BBC for a number of years. His favorite bit of tennis instruction for the listeners and viewers was, "Once you have your opponent down, put your foot on his throat and don't let him up." He also delivered this line with a degree of passion that told you that Fred Perry was a fierce competitor.

Murray's effort today was superb but it came against the man that John McEnroe continues to call "the greatest tennis player of all time." It is difficult to argue that one. Also Murray's performance let us hear what it sounds like when a nation roars. The ovation for Murray was thunderous and richly deserved as this crowd of English toffs at center court and the lesser folk on Henman Hill cheered for the introverted Scot.

The man of the hour, the moment, the day, and the tournament, was clearly Roger Federer who played tennis on this day and in the semi-final on Friday that matched the best of his career. When watching Federer glide across the grass, I often think of Muhammad Ali's marvelous self-descriptive phrase, "Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee." He does both, with the greatest of ease.

This is not to say that it was an easy tournament for Federer or an easy win today. On several occasions in the tournament he faced match point, and at one point he had to leave the court to have treatment on his ailing back. There were times today when he looked a bit shaky missing easy shots that he normally crushed. In the end however the thirty year-old Federer looked younger than his 25 year-old

opponent, wearing him down over the course of the match. It was Murray whose body seemed to have been worn down by the rigors of grueling tennis. Federer looked fresh until the final point. He is the oldest player to win a Grand Slam event since Andre Agassi won the Australian Open in 2003.

Roger Federer won his seventh Wimbledon title, tying him with William Renshaw and Pete Sampras, his boyhood hero, for the most Gentleman's singles titles at the All-England Club. Federer will become the world number one in the computer rankings tomorrow. This is something very few people, other than Roger, thought he could achieve again. It will also result in Federer passing Sampras for the record of number of weeks ranked number one. This was Federer's 17th Grand Slam victory which is a record that he may yet send higher in the next few years. It is also a record that both Nadal (11) and Djokovic (5) will have dangling in front of them.

The semi-final on Friday between Federer and Djokovic was another marvelous display of tennis. The third set of that match was a monumental struggle and produced the best tennis I have seen in any number of years, and perhaps the best I have ever seen. But as with so many tight games, the ninth game of this set, was decided when Djokovic had a break opportunity with the set at 4-4 and the match at one set each. Djokovic made an uncharacteristic mistake in shot selection, and Federer made him pay. In the blink of an eye Federer won the game to go up 5-4 and then broke Djokovic to win the set 6-4. The match was essentially over from there. Roger Federer moved on to the Sunday final and to his seventh Wimbledon title.

On Saturday there were other historic marks. With a doubles victory, Jonathan Marray and his Danish doubles partner, Frederik Nielsen, made Marray rather than Murray, the first British man to win a Wimbledon Title since Fred Perry's achievements. In the Women's Singles Final Serena Williams won here fifth title to tie her with sister Venus, and then later in the day the two sisters won their fifth Wimbledon doubles title. Serena Williams has now won fourteen Grand Slam singles titles. This day ended a remarkable comeback from life threatening medical problems over the past year for Serena, and serious medical issues for Venus as well.

At the end of the Wimbledon fortnight it was another triumph for the All-England Club, except perhaps for those

monitoring the retractable roof. They seemed to have problems with the notion that a retractable roof not only opens, but it also closes.

For Andy Murray clearly it was a disappointing day, but it was an encouraging tournament. Murray is a very good tennis player with several years left in his career. It may be his misfortune to have come on to the scene when there were three other first-rate tennis players sitting atop the men's division. Federer, Nadal, and Djokovic have proven to be a very difficult trio to join, but Murray may make it yet. Meanwhile tennis fans will be able to enjoy a high level of tennis as the battle ensues.

On Sport and Society this is Dick Crepeau reminding you that you don't have to be a good sport to be a bad loser.

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